



TESTIMONY BY  
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CHAIR, D.C. DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL  
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY AND PUBLIC SAFETY  
DECEMBER 17, 2020

Thank you, Councilmember Allen and other members of the judiciary and public safety committee. My name is Carol Grigsby, and I come before you today as chair of the DC Developmental Disabilities Council, also known as the DD Council. I also am the mother of a 27-year-old young man receiving supports under the DC I/DD Medicaid waiver. The DD Council's role is to strengthen the voice of people with developmental disabilities and their families in support of greater independence, inclusion, empowerment, and the pursuit of life as they choose. We strive to create change that eliminates discrimination and removes barriers to full inclusion.

We appreciate this opportunity to share our views about non-law enforcement alternatives to meeting community needs. In July of this year, the DD Council convened the Disability Community and Policing Working Group, which held 12 meetings to discuss issues that the disability community has faced in interactions with police officers in the DMV. We invited speakers to our meetings to learn about existing initiatives and spent a lot of time listening to and discussing personal accounts that people with disabilities and their family members have had interacting with law enforcement. Ultimately, we came up with 11 recommendations that we submitted to the DC Police Reform Commission and the full document of those is attached to this testimony.

Our main objectives with our recommendations are to reduce the need for police and ensure that when police officers are interacting with people with disabilities, those interactions remain respectful and safe, to eliminate police brutality, and to encourage better responses to behavioral health and disability related crises by involving unarmed individuals with specialized expertise and a deep understanding of disability and behavioral health issues. Our recommendations encourage a cross-agency and community collaboration that includes at the very least, the Department on Disability Services (DDS), Metropolitan Police Department (MPD), Department of Behavioral Health (DBH), Office of Unified Communications (OUC), and non-governmental community groups focused on justice and safety. We encourage you to consider the full recommendations attached.

On behalf of the Developmental Disabilities Council, I thank the committee members for your attention and look forward to taking any questions you may have.